



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
WATER RESOURCES

NEWS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IDWR Director issues Emergency Drought Declaration for 34 counties south of the Salmon River in Southern Idaho

BOISE – (April 29, 2022) – Gary Spackman, Director of the Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR), issued an emergency drought declaration on Friday that includes all 34 counties south of the Salmon River in Central and Southern Idaho.

Under Idaho Code § 42-222A, the Director of IDWR has the authority to issue an emergency drought declaration, subject to the approval of the governor. On Friday, Gov. Brad Little approved the declaration, making it effective immediately.

A drought declaration under Idaho Code § 42-222A provides a powerful tool for water users, especially in agriculture, to cope with drought, by allowing temporary water right changes for the remainder of the year. An emergency drought declaration may also help with eligibility requirements for federal drought assistance.

Upon approval of a drought emergency by Gov. Little and Director Spackman, IDWR is authorized to consider applications for temporary changes in the point of diversion, place of use, and purpose of use for valid, existing water rights and temporary exchanges of water rights, when it is determined that such changes can be accomplished without harming existing water rights.

In his order, Director Spackman states that the U.S. Drought Monitor Map, published on April 21, 2022, classified all Idaho counties located south of the Salmon River as moderate to severe drought, with most counties classified as severe drought. Before issuing the declaration, commissioners from ten counties already petitioned Director Spackman and Gov. Little to issue an emergency drought declaration for their county.

All Idaho counties south of the Salmon River are experiencing below-normal snowpack conditions and low water supply, officials said. Specifically, total cumulative snow water equivalent (SWE) levels in these basins as of April 1, 2022, ranged from 50 to 78 percent of median. The April-to-September streamflow forecasts for most locations south of the Salmon River are between 25 and 75 percent of median. As of April 1, 2022, storage in most reservoirs serving the southern half of Idaho were between 20 to 65 percent of capacity, increasing the chances that many reservoirs will not fill.

If water users are interested in filing an application for a temporary change in water right, they should follow IDWR guidelines. For more information they can contact IDWR by phone at (208) 287-4800, or visit IDWR's [Drought Declarations webpage](#).

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